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Merchants prepare for next stage

County's Phase 2 application on hold after COVID-19 outbreak at Vancouver food processor

By **KELLY MOYER**
Post-Record editor

Business owners throughout downtown Camas have been getting ready for the next phase of the state's reopening — whenever that may be. On Friday, May 23, Clark County public health officials said the state had "paused" the county's request to move into Phase 2 of the state's four-phase reopening due to a CO-

VID-19 outbreak among at least 65 workers at Firestone Pacific Foods in Vancouver. "While this outbreak is unfortunate, our response demonstrates we have the confidence and capability to respond to situations like this," Dr. Alan Melnick, Clark County's public health director, stated in a press release about the temporary halt on the county's Phase 2 variance request. Downtown merchants in Camas have been speaking to city officials

and preparing in their own ways for a possible Phase 2 reopening. Suzanne Ferguson, owner of Juxtaposition, a furniture and home decor shop located at 425 N.E. Fourth Ave., in the heart of historic downtown Camas, said she has been preparing for the next phase of the county's reopening for several weeks — setting up plastic barriers near the checkout area and on display tables to help protect staff and customers, procuring masks for her staff, placing floor signs near the

checkout so customers know where to stand in line while practicing safe physical-distancing of at least six feet, recording staff temperatures to keep an eye out for any signs of illness among those working at the shop and installing an air system that will pump more fresh air into the 48,000-square-foot building. Ferguson said last week she was still on the fence about requiring customers to wear masks, but that

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'SLOW RIDE HOME' A WILD JOURNEY

Camas native stars in award-winning documentary movie

By **KELLY MOYER**
Post-Record editor

"3,700 miles ... 11 days ... on scooters." That's the introduction to "Slow Ride Home," a documentary featuring eight members of the Seattle-based Soldiers of Destiny Scooter Club as they ride across the country, from Florida to Washington, on scooters that top out around 61 miles per hour. Released in 2019, the movie would become an official selection at the 2019 Ellensburg Film Festival and win "Best Feature Documentary" at the 2019 Rendezvous Film Festival before nabbing the "People's Choice" award at the 2020 Portland Motorcycle Film Festival.

Camas native Joe Hammill, one of the eight scooter riders featured in "Slow Ride Home," says he and his friends thought the Portland people's choice award was the pinnacle of their adventure.

Then, another opportunity presented itself.

"Winning people's choice? We thought that was the top," says Hammill, a 1994 Camas High School graduate who went on to work in radio for more than a decade before moving into his current role as a senior event booking representative for the Seattle Center. "Then Amazon Prime happened, and we thought, 'Here we go again.'"

Amazon Prime viewers can stream the documentary and see for themselves what happens when eight guys, all wearing latex animal helmets to show their "spirit animals" — Hammill's spirit animal is the deer, a creature he saw often and said he respected during his childhood years in Fern Prairie — take to (mostly) Yamaha

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The Soldiers of Destiny riders make their way from Florida to Washington on scooters during the filming of the documentary movie "Slow Ride Home."



The "Slow Ride Home" scooter riders, including Camas native Joe Hammill (second from right) celebrate the end of their 11-day trip.

School board OKs bid for Garver revamp

Historic Camas theater remodel to include elevator

By **KELLY MOYER**
Post-Record staff writer

The Camas School Board Tuesday unanimously approved plans to move forward with the renovation of the historic Joyce Garver Theater.

The theater revamp is one of the final chapters in the \$119 million construction bond Camas School District voters passed in February 2016.

School board members paused their decision to approve a construction contract earlier this month after all four bids came in more than \$2 million over budget.

"Even though we've heard that bidders are hungry, I don't believe that's true of school projects right now," Heidi Rosenberg, the school district's capital programs director, told school board members Tuesday during the Board's virtual workshop meeting.

Rosenberg said she was unsure the district could save money if board members rejected the offers and put the construction project out to bid again.

"There isn't a lot of reduction we can make at

this point," Rosenberg said. "We're talking a quarter of a million dollars (in possible project reductions) rather than in the \$2 million range."

The school board weighed three options Tuesday: Reject all four offers and rebid the project; accept the low base bid and scrap plans to install an elevator inside the three-story building; or accept the low bid for the remodel and elevator installation.

The options all included using up to \$2.5 million from the district's capital fund reserve fund, which is meant for construction projects and does not impact the general fund.

At the board's virtual meeting on Tuesday evening, school board member Doug Quinn said he believed the third option — to accept a bid from Todd Construction for \$11,665,000 (plus sales taxes and a 1-percent contingency fund) to remodel the theater and install an elevator — would "best serve (the district's) path forward."

"I would echo that," said board member Tracey Malone. "The elevator is an important part of the project and it's expensive to do that later."

Board member Corey

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'Not in Camas anymore' Painter Anna Norris finds inspiration in desolate downtown



Camas artist Anna Norris' painting, "We're Not in Camas Anymore," is featured in the front window of Natalia's Cafe in downtown Camas on Friday, May 22.

By **KELLY MOYER**
Post-Record editor

"We're Not in Camas Anymore" reads a handwritten card under one of Camas artist Anna Norris' most recent paintings.

Displayed inside the front window of Natalia's Cafe in downtown Camas, the painting — featuring Natalia's manager Wendy DelBosque, left hand on hip, peering out the front window of an empty cafe toward an equally desolate downtown street — the

painting has been receiving a lot of attention lately, somewhat surprising its creator.

"I have to say, I'm really shocked at how many people have commented on it," Norris said.

The painting's reception may be due to the fact that Norris seems to have perfectly captured the surrealistic mood of the months-long quarantine meant to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Norris, who opened

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Restoration work at Washougal wildlife refuge begins Monday

By **DOUG FLANAGAN**
Post-Record staff writer

Construction at the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Washougal is set to begin Monday, June 1.

The work is part of the multi-year Steigerwald Reconnection Project, a collaborative effort led by the Portland-based Lower Columbia Estuary Part-

nership (LCEP), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Port of Camas-Washougal to reconfigure the existing Columbia River levee system to reduce flood risk, reconnect 965 acres of Columbia River floodplain and increase recreation opportunities.

"This is a big milestone for the project," said

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HELP FOR LOST PETS



New Humane Society agreement benefits C-W animals

Community, Page A6

GYMNAST LOOKS TO FUTURE

After loss of senior season, Sugimoto ready what's next

Sports, Page A7



Refuge:

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dents may also experience intermittent lane closures on Highway 14 through the end of September.

“During this time, visitors can access the dike trail from Captain William Clark Park east to the fish ladder,” according to a news release issued by LCEP. “However, the refuge’s interior trails will not be accessible to the public, including the Gibbons Creek Wildlife Art Trail that connects to the dike trail near Redtail Lake and the refuge’s seasonal trail that connects to the dike trail just east of the fish ladder.”

Organizers hope that the project will provide fish with unobstructed passage to a high-quality habitat in the river.

“This project brings (our) work to a whole new level,” said Dave Miller of the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards, a group that has been leading and coordinating restoration and educational work at the refuge since 2006. “Volunteers and visitors will have a unique opportunity to see up close the



DOUG FLANAGAN/POST-RECORD

Construction crews work at the Steigerwald wildlife refuge.

dramatic seasonal changes in water levels, plant communities and wildlife that the refuge lands experienced before the Columbia dike and Gibbons Creek elevated channel were built.”

Project leaders selected two local companies — Rotschy, Inc. of Vancouver and LKE Corporation of Washougal — to construct the restoration project.

Collins said the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic should not significantly impact the project.

“This is primarily a moderate-sized roadway project and a large-sized earthwork project. That type of work is fairly easy to do with all the distancing and personal protective

equipment orders,” he said. “It will take some extra effort, but (the orders) are easily complied with. We don’t have any significant concerns. We’ll be compliant and careful and safe as we implement the project.”

Washington Governor Jay Inslee reopened existing construction projects in late April with the caveat that contractors develop and post a safety plan that includes social distancing measures and methods of supplying adequate numbers of personal protective equipment.

“We are obviously following the governor’s orders regarding outdoor work and gatherings,” Marriott said. “We were happy that

he opened up construction work. (Inslee’s announcement) came at the perfect time. A large, outdoor construction project involves far less personal interaction than, say, building construction, so it’s been easier to put social distancing measures in place, and we’ve done a good job of keeping our groups small, both out in the field and in meetings.”

Project backers estimate that the restoration will create roughly 500 family wage jobs and bring an additional \$67.4 million into the Southwest Washington economy.

“(The pandemic) has this highlighted the project’s economic benefits,” Collins said. “When COVID-19 hit, unemployment numbers started going up, and for everybody that I was talking to, it became much more important to get this done. So many jobs are associated with this project, and it’s important to the local economy. The main thing that was going through my mind (when the pandemic hit) was that we have to do whatever it takes to get it done, because the economic importance of this project had doubled or tripled.”

Artist:

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a Norris Arts with her husband, Ted Norris, a ceramics artist, at 1605 N.W. Sixth Ave., in Camas in December 2018, had been looking forward to another great year in business when the coronavirus pandemic hit and the governor’s “stay home” orders impacted daily life throughout Washington state in late March.

A few weeks after the quarantine started, Norris was inside Natalia’s Cafe with DelBosque, looking around the downtown Camas core that is normally bustling with life on a sunny afternoon.

“It was a gorgeous day but not a soul on the streets,” Norris said. “I looked at Wendy and said, ‘What are we going to do?’ It was like the ‘Wizard of Oz,’ like a house had been dropped on us.”

DelBosque, who has been cooking daily pick-up meals at Natalia’s since the start of the quarantine, is the main subject in Norris’ painting.

DelBosque said customers like JJ Moyers, a laboratory technical consultant staying at the Camas Hotel who recently told DelBosque she was the only person he communicated with some days, make working during the quarantine worthwhile.

“People need that human contact,” DelBosque said. “That’s why I come here everyday.”

DelBosque and Natalia’s Cafe owner Erica Slothower have kept the cafe going from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. with pick-up meals available and have been able to provide more than 400 meals to community members in need thanks to generous customers who often add a \$10 meal for a person in need to their own cafe orders.

Norris said she also would like to give back to the community. Although the “We’re Not in Camas Anymore” painting will soon hang in the Attic Gallery, Norris said she is considering giving the proceeds to local charity, possibly one that helps feed people in need.

Although their studio is not open for normal business right now, Norris said she and her husband have still been creating artwork and have found a way to get ceramics supplies to former students and fire the artwork in their studio while social distancing.

The quarantine hasn’t impacted Norris’ creativity. If anything, she said, her work is thriving.

“I’m painting a lot more now than I ever have,” she said. “The light in the studio is beautiful and I have huge pieces out and can work on all of them and never have to put them away.”

To see more of Norris work, visit the Attic Gallery online at atticgallery.com/product-category/anna-norris/.

To learn more about Natalia’s Cafe, visit facebook.com/nataliascafecam/.

Garver:

From page A1

McEnry agreed: “I feel comfortable with option three. This was not an extravagant project.”

Along with building

Lacamas Lake Elementary and Discovery High schools, and upgrading several athletic fields, the renovation of the defunct Garver Theater — named for Joyce Garver, a former Camas drama, music and art teacher — was a priority in the school district’s 2016 construction bond.

Plans call for the theater, which is located next to Liberty Middle School at the corner of Northeast 15th Avenue and Northeast Garfield, to seat more than 700; have an open lobby with a flexible floorplan; get an upgraded auditorium, balcony and stage; have a new

greenroom-classroom in the northwest corner as well as new restrooms and have an elevator to serve the public as well as to transport theater props and costumes.

Camas School District leaders hope to reopen the remodeled theater in April 2021.

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